NEUROTIC HELL

A SHORT STORY BY

THOMAS VANCURA

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“The last one was superb, Harmon, but I strongly advise you to be a bit more detailed in describing your thoughts on their suspicious decision next time,” said the voice of Mr. Mori, the head of *The Daily Dystopia* newspaper. “Apologies sir, my latest work has not produced the same quality it used to,” responded Harmon, a freelance journalist for *The Daily Dystopia*. “I will however let things pass only for this occasion seeing as you are one of my finest writers alongside Mr. Coletti but if this is to happen again, I shall have to demote you and I rather not,” said Mr. Mori sternly.

Harmon left Mr. Mori’s humble office with the impression that he was to a point where his luster was now beginning to dull and this mildly provoked him before his introspection was cut short by an all too familiar shout. “Harmon! Hey there, it sure has been some time since we spoke; you’ve been writing those articles on the *Sunwest Society*, whereas I have been held up in meetings and conventions,” shouted Beckham (Mr. Coletti). “Come, friend, take a seat by my cluttered desk so we can catch up on our current affairs.” Harmon seemed flattered by the offer and knew well he couldn’t just turn down an offer from his long-time friend and journalist partner of four years, so he willingly approached him and expected to have a proper conversation with him; but, as he got closer to Beckham, he felt a sudden agonizing shot in the back of his neck which nearly felt similar to a person cruelly stabbing him with a large needle.

He then out of the blue felt paralyzed from the harrowing pain which prompted a concerned look on Beckham’s face and not long after this, the world, to Harmon, was robbed of light until no more was left. In his unconscious state, he could merely hear vague muffles with such words like “malady” and “duty” being spoken by what sounded like two unidentifiable individuals. Several long hours later, Harmon found himself inside his small San Francisco apartment stripped nake accompanied by an unfamiliar scar behind his neck where he felt the stabbing sensation from earlier; but, what was most troubling was a powerful desire to lick his chapped lips—they had prominent blisters all around and felt unusually tingly.

“What all happened to me? Why in the hell am I naked of all things? But most of all, why do I feel the need to lick my lips like a brute,” pressed Harmon in his now fickle head. “Was it them—Mr. Mori and Beckham? Of course it couldn’t be, they are rather sensible gentlemen who could do no harm to a fly even if they hoped to do so. If it’s not them, then who would bear so much animosity to me as to give me no medical treatment or call for it? I am well aware that I am an anarchist, but I was no inventor of vicious opponents—” Before Harmon could continue

on, he gave into his compulsion to munch upon his tongue thinking the blood that spilled serenely from it perchance could have a delicious flavor that would be almost insatiable to him.

"Christ! How terrifically delectable this is! Never in years did I picture myself lusting after my own blood like it was some enslaving narcotic; howbeit, this was greater than that because I knew...I knew...I knew it was the only thing keeping me alive!" It was then Harmon realized that he needed much more and the tongue was simply not cutting it—next had to be the teeth!

At this time, Harmon was in his bed and the sheets were already soaked with his blood. He got out of his bed and walked to the kitchen which is where he happened to have some pliers in a toolbox on the counter. The entire journey from the bed to the kitchen and back had Harmon quivering in paradise so much so he felt a few of his joints dislocate; additionally, he kept dropping the pliers at the very most fifty times—ergo, his back eventually became stuck in a hunched position.

Just as he reached the bed, Harmon began violently ripping out his teeth one at a time with little effort; the horrid pain was heaven to him which simply impelled him all the more. Whenever he would pull out a tooth, the blood that gushed out of the hole where the tooth once was awarded him with the most transcendent euphoria he ever felt—it very much intoxicated his sanity; at certain times, the euphoria drove him to swoon all too often—afterwards, he would return to the deed and repeated this cycle for every tooth removed.

The top of the bed sheets were practically sodden with blood at this point and yet again, Harmon was not satisfied. "No way is this sufficient enough for me," he cried. "This fiend needs further thrills that have yet to be provided to him; he demands when this shall take place! He...He...He needs it very much! Oh please, give him blood to fulfill his glorious ambition—to reap rejoice in drinking my savory fluids!" The mind of this newfound fiend was fed up with standing by as every hour, every minute, and every second was misused; sooner or later, time would be up for him and he knew all too well.

As Harmon was contemplating, he noticed his arms would sway in such a way that would suggest he was awfully annoyed; thereby, the insignificant activity was pushed to more compulsive lengths as to produce the highest feeling of pleasure to him. Harmon flailed both his arms as excessively as he could until the joints in both of them dislocated. "No! This just isn't enough! Blood shan't be disregarded anywise," he shouted. To start, he struck his left arm once

on the ground near the left-side of his bed which acutely titillated him; latterly, he rose to indignantly strike it an upwards of sixty times—at least, from his recollection—and did the same with his other arm up until particles of bone scattered across the floor. “Yes...yes...yes,” he exclaimed with jolly, “I am merely but an object designed to be damaged without end!”

The following day in the morning after Harmon’s initial plunge into mania, a phone call was made to his residence from his friend Beckham. Beckham was clearly uneasy from Harmon not showing up at work that day and not notifying Mr. Mori about the reason for his absence. Beckham was well aware that Harmon was depressed from his recent failure of successfully reporting on the *Sunwest Society* considering the fact that he researched the secret society extensively and seemed optimistic about his upcoming article on them which, according to him, would completely expose their identity.

Harmon that morning got no sleep the previous night and looked to be bothered by the phone call in that it interfered with his hedonistic festivities, but simultaneously, he was too dutiful to dismiss the call. Harmon stumbled to the phone in the kitchen with blood dripping all over the place. He picked it up to hear Beckham shouting: “Christ! I was so worried you wouldn’t pick up. I kept trying-and-trying yet you continued to not answer so I thought you were doing something regrettable. How are you doing? Are you okay?” Harmon paused before saying: “Beckham, I am doing j-just f-fine so n-no w-worries. I c-came down w-with a-a unpleasant...u-unpleasant illness, so...so I w-will be o-out of w-work f-for a-about...about a-a w-week—” Beckham swifty interrupted Harmon by saying in a very concerned tone: “Uh...uh, Harmon, you’ve been out of work for two weeks.”

Harmon after hearing that alarming message, immediately hung up the phone and then felt an instantaneous pain all across his face. Bewildered, he went to investigate the mysterious pain using his bathroom mirror thinking it had to do with the sharp neck pain two weeks ago, but he just about fainted once he got a look of his now grotesque face: both of his cheeks were swollen to the size of bowling balls—they had what appeared to be bone shyly protruding with some parts of it cracked like fragments of the bone had fallen off at some point, his forehead was scratched extraordinarily to where the topmost part of his skull was partially discernable, his nose was gravely mangled—the nostrils had what looked to be black fluids emerging out, his lips were completely discolored and appeared thoroughly mutilated consistent with an injury a wild

animal would give somebody, and his entire face was veiled with hideous acne, blisters, and monstrous lumps the size of baseballs.

Thereafter, Harmon lost consciousness for a brief time; amid this, his whole apartment was ransacked by an unknown group of people. By the time he awoke, his vision was considerably impaired with blood oozing from his eyes which disturbed him at first thinking he may go blind but just as blood from his eyes caressed his dry mouth, he quickly relapsed and found himself thirsting for blood once again. He discovered that if he kept blinking his eyes, more blood would leak and he found this even more pleasing.

"Oh yes! I can never get enough of it," he hollered. "My life is all the more gratifying this way, and I dare say this was the solution all along to valuing my existence in a world crowded by misery...by misery...by misery! By misery! By misery! By misery...yes! Yes! Yes! Oh yes! Oh—" Harmon evoked an omnipotent impulse to blather wildly finding that he worshiped his voice profoundly all the while losing further touch with reality—something in him impeded his potential opportunities in coming back to reality and it was during this time that the presence of a hero was all too fictitious.

Blood made itself present to the lecherous Harmon by splattering offensively into his drenched mouth. His eyes at that time leaped from their sockets, yet Harmon simply took it as a gift seeing that he could take advantage of the prolific quantities of his blood that drained out of his sockets. Similar to a pet, he went down on all fours and started merrily licking up all the blood off the floor but now, his life was in deep water.

Harmon was in such a bad shape at this point that he could only crawl at a snail's pace, was incapable to speak owing to his excessive rambling which permanently damaged his vocal cords, could not hear all too well after forcibly penetrating both of his ears with his fingers in leading to the rupture of both of his eardrums, and the only thought on his mind was boozing his own blood. As this was ensuing, Beckham went out to visit his apartment in hopes of figuring out what was troubling his good friend Harmon following their offputting conversation. Initially, he decided to drop by once he finished an article he was penning for the day, but he knew well that earlier would be more preferable than later.

Beckham walked up to Harmon's apartment and noted something peculiar as he approached the door—a very foul odor was emitting from his room; for some reason, Beckham was very well acquainted with the scent. He prepared for the worst and once he opened the door,

he saw no occupants in either the living or kitchen which was rather odd for Harmon because he was known to be in the living room area in the day hours. This confused Beckham and he began anxiously moving his way inside.

"Hello...Harmon, are you there? Hello," he said. "Harmon, I really hope this isn't some joke...Hey! Where are—" Right before Beckham could finish his sentence, he froze just by the front door leading to Harmon's room. He observed Harmon lying unconscious on the floor that was to the left of his bed with a swarm of flies—and even maggots—all over his corpse—in particular, the injured areas. Beckham moreover spotted blood, feces, urine, and vomit on the bedroom walls; several spots with said bodily materials on the walls had many words and phrases—some of which made no sense at all; the name "Mori" and the phrase "I know you did it all" were the most frequent out of the other words and phrases Harmon used. One last detail Beckham noticed was that Harmon's entire abdomen area was ripped to shreds and both of his intestines were furnished on top of Harmon's nightstand lamp. Due to witnessing this horror, Beckham proceeded to vomit profusely and immediately called police and paramedics to inform them that he found his friend dead. "Oh Harmon, dear friend, just why...just why...just why," he said in a flat tone right before disappearing to parts unknown.

Epilogue

Today, your beloved anarchist pal, Beckham Coletti, has a rather great scoop for you today that shall perhaps mesmerize you, and I happen to be a good friend of the person I speak of herein. Approximately fifteen minutes away in driving distance from our offices, a freelance journalist for the paper, 25 year old Harmon Tandler, was found dead in his modest apartment for reasons unclear.

Investigators together with the San Francisco Police Department have been following the recent leads on the Tandler case to understand the cause of the journalist's puzzling death. At this time, they are leaning towards the possibility that it simply a heartless suicide, although several investigators including lead investigator Abner Carder consider foul play after interviewing a resident of the San Francisco apartment complex Earl Stockly who reported that he witnessed two masked individuals—presumably adult males from their body descriptions—in all black attire walking around the apartments suspiciously almost like they were searching for a particular room. He then saw them walk up the stairs to the second level apartment rooms but was unable to see them any further, until he later witnessed the individuals walk out of Tandler's door, heading down the stairs to the ground, and then driving off east of the apartments in a regular-sized white minivan towards the main roads. Stockly was unable to provide further information due to a lack of memory for further events.

The journalist's body was found by me when I went to check up on him following an unusual phone call I had with him three hours beforehand—he never showed up for work at the paper for nearly two weeks. The entire phone conversation, on his part, was erratic and forcibly terse according to my memory of it; therefore, I decided to give him a visit after I had a hunch that he could be in grave danger. Once I arrived, I opened his apartment door to find a grisly scene in his room: volumes of blood, feces, urine, and vomit coated the chestnut-colored floor, and the name "Mori" and the phrase "I know you did it all" were scrawled numerous times with his bodily materials onto the yellow-colored walls; furthermore, he ripped out both of his intestines, gave a fairly spiteful look, and ultimately passed away on the floor; his intestines were later transported on top of his nightstand lamp.

San Francisco investigators have already thoroughly interviewed both my superior, Mr. Mori, and myself; we were later cleared of all suspicion once they noted that all the injuries on

Tandler appeared to be self-inflicted. One of the investigators working on the Tandler case, the celebrated Inspector Raymond Stonich, believes that because the journalist's extensive work on the Sunwest Society, a supposed secret society responsible for fronting many criminal activities—human trafficking, political espionogne, and more—all over the globe, was dismissed and severely criticized, he was driven into a state of a deep depression which might have triggered him to end it all; most deem Inspector Stonich's theory as a likely cause of the journalist's tragic death, but Inspector Carder is not convinced and says he will continue examining further into his death.

Both Mr. Mori and I are fully cooperating with Inspector Carder and his team as to disclose anything beneficial in solving the expired journalist's case; all of it is for the sake of giving our most sincere condolences to the Tandler family while spreading his great legacy as both a diligent writer and a gentle soul to the San Francisco anarchist community. ***LONG LIVE THE WORD OF STRUGGLE!***

Plot

Harmon Tandler is trying to make his way in life in San Francisco as a freelance journalist for a small anarchist newspaper, The Daily Dystopia; but one day, he feels a sharp pain in his neck—almost like the feeling of a damp needle stabbing him—and subsequently, his behavior gradually grows more compulsive leading him to repeat small tasks continuously. Things become problematic as he begins injuring himself to greater degrees all the while losing touch with reality and even himself. After several days of mania, the injuries become serious enough to kill him and days move on as usual thereafter without a clue as to the origin of this harrowing malady.

Character List

- *Harmon Tandler: A 25 year old man living alone in San Francisco who suddenly begins fixating on smaller-and-smaller compulsions—for reasons unknown—that end up physically and mentally harming him and ultimately killing him; he is a freelance journalist for a small San Francisco newspaper, The Daily Dystopia, that discusses conspiracies, governmental criticisms, and more.*
- *Mr. Mori: The head of The Daily Dystopia newspaper and Harmon's boss.*
- *Beckham Coletti: Harmon's good friend; a freelance journalist for The Daily Dystopia who wrote on Harmon's mysterious death.*
- *Inspector Abner Carder: The lead investigator in Harmon's mysterious death; he believes that Harmon death was the result of foul play rather than suicide.*
- *Earl Stockly: A resident of Harmon's apartment complex; he witnessed two men supposedly enter Harmon's room who may have been the same men that ransacked Harmon's room while he was unconscious.*
- *Inspector Raymond Stonich: A prominent investigator in the San Francisco Police Department and investigator in Harmon's mysterious death; he believes that Harmon killed himself rather than being the victim of foul play.*